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EPA chief directs agency to put focus on environmental justice

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Body

WASHINGTON - Environmental Protection Agency chief Michael Regan on Wednesday directed the agency's offices to sharpen their focus on tackling environmental injustices by strengthening enforcement against polluters, engaging with and investing in pollution-burdened communities and other measures.

"We must examine, and appropriately use, the full array of policy and legal tools at our disposal to incorporate environmental and ***climate justice*** considerations in our analysis, rulemaking, permitting, enforcement, grantmaking, operations, disaster response and recovery, and other activities," Regan said in a statement.

President Joe Biden has put environmental justice at the center of his sweeping, government-wide climate change agenda, promising to direct investments and re-assess project permitting in communities that bear the brunt of air and water pollution.

Regan, the first African American man to lead the EPA, has said protecting indigenous and low-income communities and communities of color from being overburdened by pollution is among his top priorities as the agency's administrator.

He directed his general counsel, as well as all regional EPA administrators and deputy and assistant administrators, to work with the Office of Environmental Justice "to identify ways to ensure that the country's environmental laws - and the policies implemented under them - deliver benefits to all individuals and communities."

Regan directed them to focus on strengthening enforcement of violations of key environmental statutes and civil rights laws; incorporate environmental justice considerations in the regulations they craft; improve early and more frequent engagement with overburdened communities and prioritize those communities when considering grants and investments.

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